

On the close of this operation, the amount of stock of the United States that will then remain the property of the public, will be as follows: £. 95,440 six per cents, producing an annual interest of £. 5,728 8 o. £. 111,870 three per cents. £. 3,356 2 o. £. 94,552 deferred stock, producing no interest until January, 1801. Total of principal stock £. 301,862. Total of annual interest £. 9,084 10 o.

These objects, thus examined by the committee, there then remained for their consideration one demand against the state of very serious complexion and extent. The claim alluded to is that of the Messieurs Vanstaphorst, of Amsterdam, for the recovery of which, with extravagant damages, they have already instituted a suit in the supreme federal court.

In compliance with the application of the said Messieurs Vanstaphorst and their agent, made by letters to the legislature, and referred to the committee, an estimate of appropriations already made, and of others, are now proposed, for the complete payment of the annual interest arising on the principal sum loaned of £. 40,500 currency, which every concurrent motive of national faith, and her own interest, would induce government to pay regularly, rather than permit to accumulate.

But, as the final liquidation of this demand in the mode now pursued, may deeply affect the political rights of this state, as an independent member of the union, the committee are of opinion that it would be advisable rather to propose reasonable offers of compromise, than to permit a precedent to be established, by which any individual foreigner may endanger the political and private rights of this state and her citizens; and, for this purpose, they propose, that the act of April session, 1787, chap. 42, be now revived, and that the commissioners thereby appointed be authorized to liquidate and finally adjust with the said Messieurs Vanstaphorst, or their agent duly authorized, their said claim, and to propose to them either to subscribe the same in part of this state's quota of the assumed debt of the United States, if the time for completing the same shall be prolonged, or to receive in discharge thereof, at a reasonable price, so much of the deferred or three per cent. stock of this state, as may be agreed on. And the committee are of opinion that the legislature should pass such acts and resolutions as may be necessary for all the foregoing purposes.

All which is submitted to the honourable house.

By order,

N. PINKNEY, clk.

Which was read.

Mr. Duvall, from the committee, brings in and delivers to Mr. Speaker a bill, entitled, An act for the relief of Elizabeth Dorsey, executrix of Thomas Dorsey, late of Anne-Arundel county; which was read the first time and ordered to lie on the table.

Mr. Clark appeared in the house.

Mr. Mercer brings in and delivers the following letter, to the honourable John Henry and Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, Esquires.

To the honourable JOHN HENRY and CHARLES CARROLL, of CARROLLTON, Esquires, representatives of the state of Maryland in the senate of the United States.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the journal of the proceedings of the senate of the United States, transmitted to us by authority, a proposition, that the doors of that honourable body should be open whilst sitting in their legislative capacity, appears to have been made and rejected. The reasons, however cogent, which led to a determination so opposite to the already declared sense of a considerable proportion of the confederacy, remain suppressed in that secrecy which this vote seems designed to perpetuate. Left silent acquiescence may be improperly construed into implied approbation, and as such tend to weaken the efforts of other states, we do not hesitate to declare our sense against this determination of that honourable body.

The legislative deliberations of these states, both under their colonial and national establishments, have been generally, if not universally, open: They derived the practice from that country whence they emigrated, and habit and prejudice are now strongly in favour of a custom hitherto uninterrupted. Innovations, which are at variance with long and approved usage, ought to be supported by substantial considerations; none such have been suggested; none such, we confess, occur to our own reflection, nor can we discern any reason why the motives of general and public acts should remain buried in silence and secrecy.

In free governments the authority and sanction of the laws in a great measure depend on the influence of opinion; the public mind, therefore, cannot be too thoroughly possessed of the reasons which influenced their adoption; and if the motives of measures fairly exposed and generally communicated, will not secure them public approbation, they generally furnish conclusive argument against their continuance. Mystery is the garb of tyranny, whilst free government, founded on reason, derives new strength from every inquiry.

On the formation of the federal constitution, a great proportion of America viewed, with a jealous eye, the union of legislative and executive powers in the senate of the United States; the declarations of rights of the several states had borne united testimony against this combination; and when the immense patronage, both in the foreign and home departments, attached to that body, is contemplated, it may create suspicion lest general laws may be calculated with reference to those persons who are to discharge their duties. Solicitation and canvass for office may possibly introduce a spirit of negotiation unfriendly to that disinterested conduct so indispensable to equal legislation. We know of no corrector of this effect of the constitution of the body so powerful as the admission of the public eye. Characters will always be there found both ready and capable to detect and expose improper motives, if any such should ever arise, and the press, that modern censor of public morals, would